

The Balkans



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The Balkans is an area in Eastern Europe, located between Asia and Europe. The Balkans is a very diverse region where many ethnic groups exist and many languages are spoken.

The Turkish or Ottoman Empire had occupied all of the Balkans up until the early 1800's. By the 20th century the Empire became corrupt and inefficient. Little by little, the territories within the Ottoman Empire declared independence. By the mid 1800's the Balkan territories of Greece, Serbia, Romania and Montenegro had set up their own nation states.

The Root of the Problem

Nationalism (*love for one's nation*) was a powerful force in the Balkans during the early 1900's. People loved their nation so much they were willing to die for it. Many Balkan people were happy to finally be free and wanted to **expand their territory**. Serbia was one such Balkan nation (*refer to the map above*). Serbia is a nation inhabited by Slavs, who are culturally very similar to Russian people. Serbia wanted to invite all of the other Slavic people that were scattered throughout the Balkans to join them in Serbia. The problem was that Serbia's neighbor to the north, the Austria-Hungarian Empire, was against this idea. Austria-Hungary had many Slavs living in their nation, and they feared there would be a rebellion among the Slavic people in Austria-Hungary. Russia, the other major power in the area, supported Serbia's plan. After all, Russians are Slavic, and they would be happy to see a Slavic nation like Serbia become powerful. In addition, control over the Balkans would protect Russia's trade routes on the Mediterranean Sea. This conflict of interests created a very tense situation in the Balkans. *Any sudden action by these nations could easily have led to war.*



The Balkans ↑

TASK: Based on the reading above, fill in the three charts below.

Serbia's Goals

Austria-Hungary's Goals

Russia's Goals

Describe the problem in the Balkans:



The Serbian Black Hand Society

The **Black Hand Society**, also known as the “*Union or Death*” organization, was a group based in Serbia. They supported the idea that all Slavs living in Austria-Hungary should rebel against the Austria-Hungarian government and join Serbia. Below are some of the rules of membership:

Article 1: This organization has been created with the goal of unifying all Serbs. All Serbs who are devoted to this cause may become members.

Article 2: This organization prefers terrorist action instead of discussion and for this reason must be kept secret from persons who do not belong to it.

Article 4: To accomplish this task, the organization must:

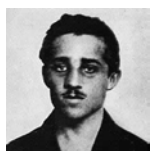
- a) seek support from any group that has friendship toward Serbia
- b) fight those who are against our ideas
- c) lend support to Serbians in other areas of Europe

Article 26: the members are known only by their numbers.

Article 31: Anyone who enters the organization may never withdraw from it.

Article 33: When the central committee issues the penalty of death on one of its members, the execution will take place right away.

What are the goals of the Serbian Black Hand Society? How do they intend to achieve these goals?



A young Serb named Gavrilo Princip was one member of the Black Hand. In 1914, he and a group of other Black Hand members went on a top secret mission to Bosnia, a territory that was part of Austria-Hungary.

Watch the video clip and answer the following question:

Why did Princip and his gang go to Bosnia?

Did they accomplish their mission?

TASK: With a partner, you will first watch the events that unfolded in Europe in 1914. You will take a few minutes to discuss what you saw, and write down your answer. Your goal is to answer the question: **Why did Gavrilo Princip's actions lead to BIG problems in Europe?**

NOTES:

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Ethnic groups in the Balkans, 1914

Austrians	→ → → →	23%
Hungarians	→ → → →	21%
Slavs (this group includes Slovaks, Slovenes, Croats, Serbs)	→ → → →	21%
Czechs	→ → → →	15%
Poles	→ → → →	17%
Ruthenians	→ → → →	1%
Italians	→ → → →	1%
Others	→ → → →	1%

Look at the chart of ethnic groups in the Balkans to the left. Why would having so many ethnicities living in one small place be a problem?

The Black Hand Society



The **Black Hand Society** was a group of Serbian nationalists who supported the idea of breaking away from Austria-Hungary and forming their own country. The excerpt below lists some of their beliefs:

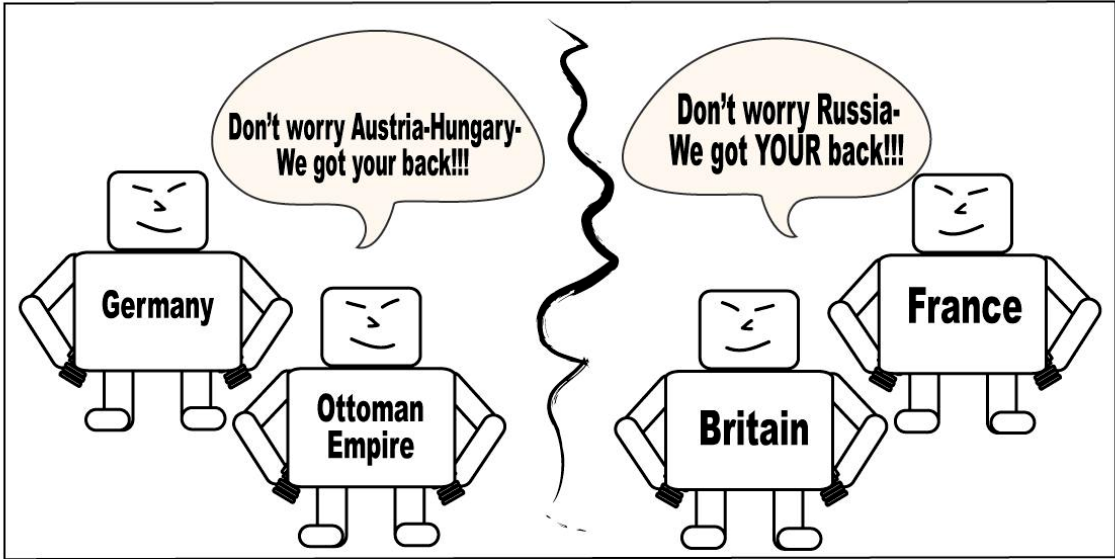
- 1. The purpose of this organization is the union of all Serbs.**
- 2. We believe in using terrorism and violence to achieve our goals.**
- 3. We will use any means available to fight the enemies of this idea.**
- 4. The members of this organization will only be known by their numbers, not their names.**
- 5. Anyone who enters this organization can never leave this organization.**

Describe the goals of the “Black Hand.”

The Assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand

In June of 1914, the Archduke Franz Ferdinand, a prince in the Austrian-Hungarian Empire was shot and killed by **Gavrilo Princip**. Princip was a member of the **Black Hand organization**. He killed Franz Ferdinand because he hated European aristocrats (nobility) and believed that the Austrian Prince did not understand the feelings and needs of the Serbian people. The assassination of Ferdinand was the beginning of a chain of events that started World War One.

1914--After the assassination, the major nations of Europe responded.



World War I begins!!!

Based on the cartoon above, write a short story about how WWI began:
